

CONNECTIONS

November 2013 VOLUME 13, ISSUE 11

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

Employee Assistance Program: An Investment in Your Health and Happiness

“I believe that EAP family counseling saved my marriage.”
 DHHS Employee



By Richard Mettler,
 Human Resources and Development

DHHS employees are hard-working and mission-driven in their daily commitment: Helping people live better lives. DHHS also cares about the well-being of employees, and wants to be there when help is needed. One of the important ways DHHS does this is through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Employee Assistance is provided through a contract with Deer Oaks EAP, which offers a remarkably wide range of services.

EAP provides information, referral, and support to you and your dependents during times of need, free of charge. A few of the services available are:

- Confidential assessment and counseling provided by qualified professionals – Everyday people like any of us can use this benefit to sort through ordinary life challenges that wear on everyone from time to time, restoring us to happier, healthier, and more balanced lives. Your privacy is ensured at all times. No one, including your spouse, is given any information about you without your written permission.

Employees are provided up to five counseling hours (face-to-face or via telephone) per issue (e.g., stress at work, marital difficulties, problems with a teenager). There is no annual limit to the number of issues for which a person can contact EAP.

- Critical incident stress management debriefings – Upon a traumatic event, such as the loss of a co-worker, qualified professionals are available to speak to employees at

the worksite. There is no annual limit to the number of debriefings provided.

- Monthly electronic newsletters – There is a newsletter for employees and a newsletter for supervisors, each of which can be accessed from the Deer Oaks website.
- Find-Now Child & Elder Care Program assists in the search for licensed, regulated, and inspected child and elder care facilities in your area.



www.deeroaks.com
 Username & Password: SON
 1-866-792-3616
 (24 hours)



Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov. I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your idea in a future column.

The screenshot shows the Deer Oaks website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for HOME, ABOUT, SERVICES, CONTACT US, and PROVIDERS. Below the navigation is a banner image of a man and a woman looking at a laptop, with the text 'EAP SERVICES' overlaid. Underneath the banner, there are three columns of service descriptions:

- EAP SERVICES:** Deer Oaks offers a Comprehensive Employee Assistance Program, Work/Life, and Health and Wellness Services to public and private employer groups throughout North America.
- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:** Psychological Assessment and treatment services for children, adolescents, adults and families.
- GEROPSYCHOLOGY SERVICES:** A comprehensive provider of assessment and consultation services to long term rehabilitation facilities throughout the United States, specializing in geriatric psychology and disabilities.

Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov
DHHS Employee Website: <http://dhhsemployees/>
DHHS Helpline: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov

Chief Executive Officer: Kerry Winterer	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Vivianne Chaumont
Behavioral Health Division Director: Scot Adams, Ph.D.	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Joseph Acierno
Children and Family Services Division Director: Thomas Pristow	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
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DHHS' Employee Website....

New information and photos are added daily to the employee website. Here are some recent posts and the dates they appeared. Like what you're seeing and reading? Then check out the employee homepage every day! Got an idea or a photo you'd like to share for the employee homepage or *Connections*? Send it to Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov.

Homepage Homeruns

[50 Years of Service for Darlene Porter, Nov. 7, 2013](#)



This year is particularly special for **Darlene Porter**, Secretary at the Norfolk Regional Center, because she is celebrating her 50th anniversary working for the state. Darlene tells *Connections*...

"I started my state career at the Norfolk State Hospital, now the Norfolk Regional Center, in 1963. I have been in the same office for all of those 50 years! I started as one of three support people and eventually became the only one serving an extended department. I have seen the Regional Center go from 1,200 male and female patients to 80 males. We went from locked wards to some open units and from a totally open building and grounds to no admission to the building without keys.

There were no copy machines when I started. Carbon paper was an important part of every day; from manual typewriters to computers; from mimeograph and ditto machines to copiers, fax machines, scanners, etc. From taking a quarter to lunch and bringing back change, to \$4 for lunch. From having our own dairy, garden, and bakery, to food cooked at the Veterans' Home, and back to cooking at NRC."

When asked what keeps Darlene coming to work every day, she answered quickly...the great bunch of people I work with. They are my work "family." The most important part of all the years, she said, "is the people I have known because of my work here at the Regional Center."

[There's No Place Like Wayne, Oct. 31, 2013](#)

Everything changed in an instant for the DHHS employees in Wayne, Nebraska, when a tornado struck the city earlier this month. **Mona Kramer**, Service Coordinator, said: "The five of us were in a building that was destroyed by the tornado on Oct. 4, 2013. We all work for Nebraska Health and Human Services. We were all working out of different locations following the tornado, and now we are all back in Wayne.

In an attempt to take the high road/yellow brick road, we decided it would be appropriate for everyone to wear a Halloween-themed costume based on the Wizard of Oz. The yellow bricks in the front of us are from the original building. **Stacy Schenk**, Community Support Specialist, painted them yellow for us with the following saying "May the yellow brick road always lead you home. Wayne, Ne, October 4, 2013.

We are all very glad to be back in Wayne and back working together.

Thank you to all that provide support and assistance with getting us back to Wayne."



The Good Life:

A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



Wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

However you choose to celebrate, with turkey and the trimmings or fast food, and with family, friends, or on your own, please have a happy and peaceful and safe holiday. If you are traveling, travel safe.

Thanks for all you do every day.



Husker Volleyball Players Talk Teamwork with Behavioral Health Staff

By Nancy Heller,
Program Specialist, Behavioral Health

Teamwork was a featured topic at a recent Training Camp for staff from Behavioral Health's Community Based Services section. The "Training Camp" was held to ensure team members understand the fundamentals of their work and find their purpose as it relates to Behavioral Health's overall mission and vision. Presentations by fellow BH team members included various functions of the Division, inspiring messages from people who have benefited from services funded through the Division, and fun team exercises and activities complete with prizes, as well as healthy food and other treats.

A Training Camp highlight included a visit from two members of the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Volleyball Team, Amber Rolfzen (#5) and Kadie Rolfzen (#6), who spoke about what it means to be a member of a team.

Amber and Kadie shared some of their experiences of being members of several teams. Their messages included:

- As individuals on a team, everyone has a role, everyone has a skill, everyone must know what the common goal is, everyone must learn to trust their teammates in their role, and everyone must be responsible for his or her actions.
- To maintain balance, each person as well as the team as a whole, must focus on fundamentals.
- If a team member has a negative attitude, help him or her figure out how to change to keep things positive and to keep everyone working together.
- To enhance team chemistry, let everyone be themselves. Don't try to change who you are, but learn to mesh and blend together.
- The team coach teaches the game rules and skills, refines techniques and is in charge of the game plan.

- Trust and listen to yourself and your teammates; give and take advice; and always bring everything you have to the court/workplace.

Other messages included:

- Teamwork is an individual skill that requires constant attention and coaching.
- Each person on a team must learn to ask for feedback, to listen more, to consider other perspectives, to walk in another teammate's shoes and to spend time outside of their comfort zones.
- Each person on a team must learn to share themselves, to encourage other points of view, to practice open-mindedness, to encourage risk-taking, to put team success ahead of personal success, and to create an environment of trust and collaboration.
- When everyone moves forward together, success happens.



Behavioral Health staff, Community Based Services Partners and Husker Volleyball players Kadie and Amber Rolfzen at a recent Training Camp in Lincoln.

Elder Abuse Issues Training Dec. 17

By Madhavi Bhadbhade,
Program Specialist

The State Unit on Aging in Medicaid and Long-Term Care and the Nebraska State Bar Association's Elder Law Section are co-sponsoring a special training on elder issues. "Elder Abuse, Financial Exploitation and Elder Rights Issues" will be held Dec. 17 from 8:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST at NET in Lincoln. The training will also be offered via web streaming at 13 locations across the state and/or your desktop computer.

The training is free and open to staff in the Area Agencies on Aging, long-term care facilities, APS, long-term care Ombudsman volunteers, Senior Medicare Patrol volunteers, caregivers, attorneys, bankers, law enforcement and other organizations. DHHS employees may also attend the training with supervisor approval and by registering in advance.

Training topics include: guardianships and conservatorships; healthcare fraud, identity theft and scams; low-cost legal services in Nebraska; end of life issues; legal and psychological elements in undue influence; special needs trusts; and ethics in representing elderly clients.

For more information, including the agenda, registration form and web streaming locations sites across Nebraska, visit:

www.dhhs.ne.gov/agingtraining.

Targeting Young Adult Tobacco Users to Quit...What's Tobacco Costing You?

By *Monica Pribil, Program Coordinator, Tobacco Free Nebraska*

With the goal of reducing the number of young adult (18-25) tobacco users in Nebraska, the DHHS Tobacco Free Nebraska (TFN) program launched two new micro websites this year.

“Nebraska has been very successful in reducing youth (18 and under) tobacco use over the last 10 to 15 years,” said **Jeff Soukup**, program manager for Tobacco Free Nebraska. “We knew though that we hadn’t made as much progress with young adults and ramped up our efforts to reach the population.”

TFN decided to take a two-step approach ... targeting young adults and targeting their employers.

“Not everyone in this age group goes

to school,” said Soukup. “But, most are employed and it made sense to reach out to employers with information about the cost of employee tobacco use and strategies to help reduce that use.”

To make sure that TFN was on the right track, Nebraska employers were surveyed in April 2012. Of those who replied to the survey, nearly two-thirds believed that tobacco use negatively impacted their workplace. Almost 75 percent said they would access materials if they were available on a website.

After careful planning and material development, the TobaccoHurtsBusiness.ne.gov website launched in February 2013. Since its launch, the site’s homepage has become the second most viewed page on the TFN website.

To help develop the youth site, young Nebraskans ages 18-25 were surveyed in August 2012. The survey’s purpose was to get feedback on creative designs as well as information about media use and preferences. The majority of participants reported using a laptop computer (76 percent), smartphone (63.5 percent) and desktop computer (55 percent) to access the Internet. They also said they spend more than four hours online in an average day.

The “What’s Tobacco Costing You?” message notes that tobacco use costs more than the monetary price of buying tobacco products. It may in fact be keeping people from a full paycheck (if they’re sick and don’t get paid sick time), a higher salary or the opportunity for advancement.

The TobaccoCostsYou.com site launched in October 2013 with a video contest.

The site’s focus is to get young adults to think about the cost of their tobacco use in different ways by noting what else could be bought with the money that is spent on tobacco.

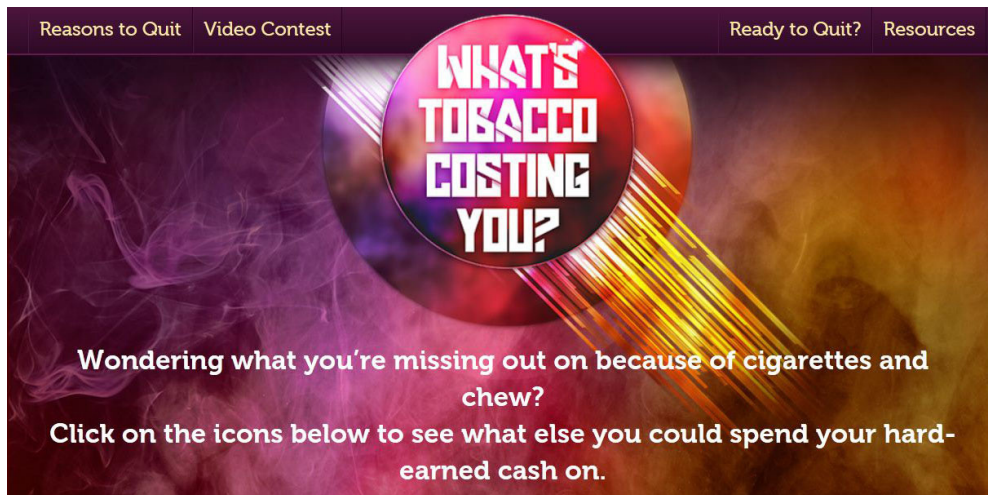


Check out the companion Twitter account [@TobaccoCostsYou](https://twitter.com/TobaccoCostsYou) also launched with the website.



For example: A pack-a-day smoker who decides to quit, will save up enough money in one month to buy:

- Four tanks of gas for a gas-guzzling car. 
- A fancy coffee maker to make the lattes needed to start the day. 
- Two months (or more) of smartphone service. 



Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

DHHS Employees Earn Honors in NPHIC Awards Program

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services won two awards in a recent National Public Health Information Coalitions' (NPHIC's) Awards for Excellence program. Eighty-eight awards were presented during a ceremony at NPHIC's annual Symposium, held in Chicago in October.

Monica Pribil, Program Coordinator, Tobacco Free Nebraska; **Greg Votava**, DHHS webmaster; and **Bill Wiley**, Public Information Officer, won a silver medal award in the category of "websites" for DHHS' "Tobacco Hurts Business" site. The Tobacco Hurts Business website helps employers understand how employee tobacco use can affect their business' bottom line. Read more about this new website on page 5 of this newsletter, and visit the website [here](#).

Another silver medal award, this one in the "broadcast/audio visual" category, went to Public Information Officers **Mike Wight** and **Jody Hansen**, for their part in producing a public service announcement called, "I own My Recovery." This radio PSA was produced for the Division of Behavioral Health to promote September as Recovery Month. Take a listen [here](#).

Congratulations to all of our NPHIC winners for the good work they do in helping Nebraskans live healthier lives.

Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity Receives 2013 Rural Health Presidential Award



Staff of the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity pictured with NeRHA Executive Director John Roberts and President Janelle Ali-Dinar

Each year, the Nebraska Rural Health Association honors people who have contributed to rural health care through leadership at its annual conference. These awards recognize individuals and organizations who take on leadership roles in healthcare and their communities. On Sept. 19, 2013, The Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity received the 2013 Rural Health Presidential Award. The Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity has been providing extraordinary positive impact, providing high quality work and outcome measurements for 21 years. While most of their work never makes headlines, their mission, vision

and passion changes lives individually, within families and communities on a daily basis. Dating back to 1992 when a Minority Health Status Report was published, which helped start a Minority Health Office within the Nebraska Department of Health Bureau of Health Policy and Planning, the report concluded that although Nebraska's populations were healthy, it's racial and ethnic minority population was not. In January 1997, a major reorganization within state government created three new agencies and at that time the Office of Minority Health (OMH) became one of several public health offices within the Nebraska Health and Human Services

System. The Office of Minority Health was staffed with an Administrator and an Administrative Assistant.

In 2001 with the passage of LB 692 by Nebraska's unicameral in 2001, the Office of Minority Health was able to expand its coverage and visibility throughout the State of Nebraska. This bill allowed for the creation of two satellite offices which were to be located in Congressional Districts two and three. The satellite offices work closely with public health stakeholders in each area to coordinate with local and regional, state and community based health agencies on minority health activities. This bill also provided funding for minority public health services in counties having a minority population equal to or exceeding five percent of the total population of the county in the first and third congressional district as determined by the most recent census. The number of counties in Nebraska with minority populations of five percent of greater continues to increase year to year. In 2000, the number was 29, by 2005 that number increased to 33. In 2013, that number has increased to 44 counties. Much of this growth has come from an increase in minorities who are now residing in rural Nebraska. Through the minority health initiatives, programs have served more than 150,000 individuals across the state.

Spirit of Giving Stories Start with the Generous Employees at DHHS

The holidays are a special time. In December we see our coworkers at work and outside the office who support DHHS' mission of helping people live better lives. DHHS employees are a creative and generous bunch. We contribute to all sorts of great causes all year round and help fill the needs of our communities. It's really wonderful to see. So, now it's official. The 2013 Spirit of Giving season is in full swing. Here are a few stories to get the giving season off to a good start.

LRC's Chili Cook-off for a Cause

By Nina Anderson-Trumble

Lincoln Regional Center's (LRC's) Wellness Committee held the 2nd Annual LRC Chili Cook-off on Nov. 14.

Congratulations to **Nicole Zimmerman**, Activity Specialist, Building #5, for her winning recipe: "Lip Smackin' Chicken Enchilada Chili."

LRC employees raised a total of \$289.80 for Nicole's charity of choice, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (Cook-off contest rules: A \$1.00 participation fee plus money donated to everyone's favorite chili goes to the winner's choice of charities).

LRC had 14 entries in the Cook-off, and all were delicious! Many thanks to all the cooks who participated (including Director Scot Adams) and also to the Wellness Committee members and Facility Maintenance crew members who helped make this event possible!

The top three winners were:
 1st - Lip Smackin' Chicken Enchilada Chili - **Nicole Zimmerman**
 2nd - Indian Chili - **Leslie Guthrie**
 3rd - Grandpa's D@#% Good Chili - **Sara Banset**

The real winner here is the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention!



Tary Paris, left, PCC Coordinator, and Julie Hendricksen, Staff Assistant, in Husker jacket, enjoy some chili samples.



Spare Change, Tail-wagging Rewards

By Edilma (Eli) R. Him Osorio

During 2012, my coworkers and I deposited pennies and change we did not want in a container. In December before Christmas we selected our charity, the Capitol Humane Society of Lincoln, and we gave them the money we collected throughout the year. We collected a total of \$157.64, in change alone! It was a heavy container that I took to the bank. We were richly rewarded, though, when someone from the Capital Humane Society visited us to pick up our donation and brought with them a wonderful surprise, pictured above.

Time to Pay it Forward

a bulletin from Karen Statham

A huge thank you to everyone who has already brought donations for our up-coming delivery to the People's City Mission (see Oct. *Connections*). The holidays are fast approaching and we are able to continue taking even more donations of hats, gloves and socks, until the last week in December. Find us on the third floor in the Southeast corner of the NSOB. So much to be thankful for... Sincerely DDBH unit.

Looking for Ways to Share?

If you and your coworkers are looking for someone to share your many blessings with, sometimes the answer is right under your nose. One of DHHS' 24-hour facilities may have a special need that you could help fulfill. For example, last year, people gathered stationery for the Lincoln Regional Center for the patients to use all year round. The employee homepage also featured a story from the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home highlighting Anton, a member who enjoys crafts, hobbies and crocheting afghans. People at WNVH say Anton can always use more yarn. Maybe you've got some extra.

Other facilities may appreciate donations like these two. Ask around! Or put up a special request on the employee bulletin board and let your coworkers know what they can do to help!

In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees who are *helping people live better lives*

Sometimes we paraphrase letters and/or shorten them slightly in order for us to include as many as possible.

From DHHS' Facebook page:

Thank you to **Gwen Hurst** (Community Based Services Program Manager, Lincoln) for valuable information about DD service eligibility and processes given during her presentation at the Elkhorn Public Schools Young Adult Transition Program's Provider Fair. We love Gwen!

Dawna Daily



Mariellen Becker (Administrator, Medicaid and Long-term Care, Omaha),

I just wanted to send you a quick message to let you know how grateful I am for **Joan Rickert** (Social Services Supervisor, Medicaid and Long-term Care) out of the Columbus office. She has been extremely helpful to me in learning about the Medicaid application process. She is always willing to answer a question or point me in the needed direction as I navigate the process with students that I am working with. I just wanted to let you know that she is appreciated!

Columbus High School & Middle School

We Give Thanks

This holiday season and always, the staff of *Connections* would like to offer our many thanks for all you do for Nebraskans.

From City Impact's Facebook page:

THANK YOU to our October Strengths for Life Career Partners, including the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for being available for our mentors and students this past month. After visiting with **Meagann Schweitzer** (Children and Family Services Specialist Supervisor, Lincoln) from DHHS, one mentor commented that the visit went "really well. Meagann shared additional contacts with me about other places they work with so that we can continue to explore!"

Editor's Note: Meagann Schweitzer was contacted by City Impact to be interviewed by a student about the career of a case manager. Meagann provided them with basic information about what caseworkers do in their job and how they work with families to keep kids safe. When Meagann was shown the positive comment she responded, "Thank you! I love being able to share all the positive things we do for children and families!"

"Please thank the counselors and boys who helped us lay sod. It would have been a really long day without them. We really appreciated their help."

Pictured: **YRTC-K youth** and **Caleb Brandt** (Youth Counselor I, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney)

helping to lay sod at a Habitat for Humanity house in Kearney. This house was one of three that the young men and staff at YRTC-K volunteered to help sod.



Department of Health & Human Services



The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' mission: **Helping people live better lives.**

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